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**Minneapolis Advisory Committee
on People with Disabilities**

Date: November 22, 2002.

To: Sandra Colvin Roy, Chairperson & Members
Transportation and Public Works Committee
City of Minneapolis

From: Margot Imdieke Cross, Chairperson & Members
Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with
Disabilities

Subj: Advisory Committee Response to the Parking Meter Management
Plan as it relates to Disability Parking

We the members of the Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities have reviewed the Parking Meter Management Plan and have discussed the potential impact that the proposed changes would have on the disability community, our ongoing ability to get to our destination and related barriers. With these considerations in mind, we make the following comments.

We strongly support several of the proposals contained in the plan and recommend their implementation:

- **Increased Enforcement:** We agree that there are an ever-increasing number of individuals who are illegally using disability parking certificates. Those individuals need to be identified and removed from the equation. We strongly support increased enforcement in this area and encourage the City to provide greater resources for this effort. Since this effort would clearly be quite labor intensive, it is also the recommendation of the Advisory Committee that the City partner with the Disability Community and create a pool of volunteers to assist.
- **Disability Parking Volunteers:** We recommend the establishment of an ongoing group of volunteers consisting of individuals from the Disability Community who would assist in the labor intensive effort of gathering disability parking data. This data would be used to identify individuals who were violating the disability parking laws. This volunteer group would work collaboratively with traffic enforcement.
- **Discount Ramp Parking:** We understand that several hundred disability parking spaces in Municipal Parking ramps and lots sit empty every day. In an attempt to fill those spaces, the Advisory Committee strongly recommends that Municipal Parking lots and ramps offer a discounted parking rate to eligible individuals with disabilities equal to 25% of the actual

monthly contract rate. According to the 2000 Census, close to three times as many working age adults with disabilities lived in poverty as compared to working age nondisabled adults. We believe that many individuals with disabilities have low paying or entry level positions and have limited financial resources to dedicate to parking costs, especially when the individual can park for free at the meter. With the exorbitant cost of ramp and lot parking in downtown Minneapolis and existing problems with public transportation, especially in the winter months, many individuals have little choice but to rely on their personal vehicle and rely on meter parking.

- **Employer Provided Reasonable Accommodations:** State and Federal law require employers to provide reasonable accommodations to their employees with disabilities. With the support of the Mayor and City Council, the Advisory Committee would like to recommend that downtown employers be encouraged to provide legally mandated accommodations and collaborate with us to find alternative parking for employees with disabilities.
- **Public Education Campaign:** Individuals with disabilities have a wide range of access needs, some are extremely limited in the distance they can ambulate or travel. Many individuals with disabilities have made huge sacrifices in order to obtain and secure employment. The possibility of a perceived threat to that employment status will cause many individuals to react strongly and negatively. The Advisory Committee cautions our elected officials to proceed in a thoughtful and respectful manner and to inform the public of the issues and the possible remedies before implementing them. If we as a City, as a community and as a partner can make a strong and positive statement about this impending transition, it will make the whole experience more positive. We suggest that news coverage, community cable coverage, public service announcements community meetings and neighborhood organizations be utilized to educate and inform the public.
- **Physician Education Campaign:** According to information received from the Department of Public Safety, seven of the ten eligibility requirements for disability parking privileges are required by the federal government and are uniformly required throughout the country. One of the areas where we as a community might have greater impact would be to work to educate the physicians and chiropractors that are currently signing the actual disability parking applications. It is the belief of many that individuals with marginal disabilities are being inappropriately approved by medical professionals.
- **Better Coordination of Working Elements:** We strongly recommend that Minneapolis Public Works, utilities, cable companies, light rail transit and other working elements who need to block off streets, hood meters and redirect traffic be better coordinated so that the same street isn't affected several times during one construction season.

- **Time Limits on Parking Meters:** The Advisory Committee does not support the implementation of time limits on meters. It is our position that there are many factors which are causing the parking problems in downtown Minneapolis, construction, excessive use of the "No Parking" hoods, inappropriately parked delivery trucks and emergency vehicles, to name a few. Further, we believe the implementation of time restrictions are punitive in nature and may easily become the single solution; thereby leaving individuals with disabilities in an extremely difficult situation where some may lose their employment status. If, after the other options have been implemented we need to revisit this issue, we should do so at that time, but we feel it is imperative that a good faith effort be made to guide, not force, this change.

The Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities would like to thank you for this opportunity to provide input and we respectfully request that we be included in future discussions and decisions on this important issue.

cc: Greg Finstad, Minneapolis Department of Public Works